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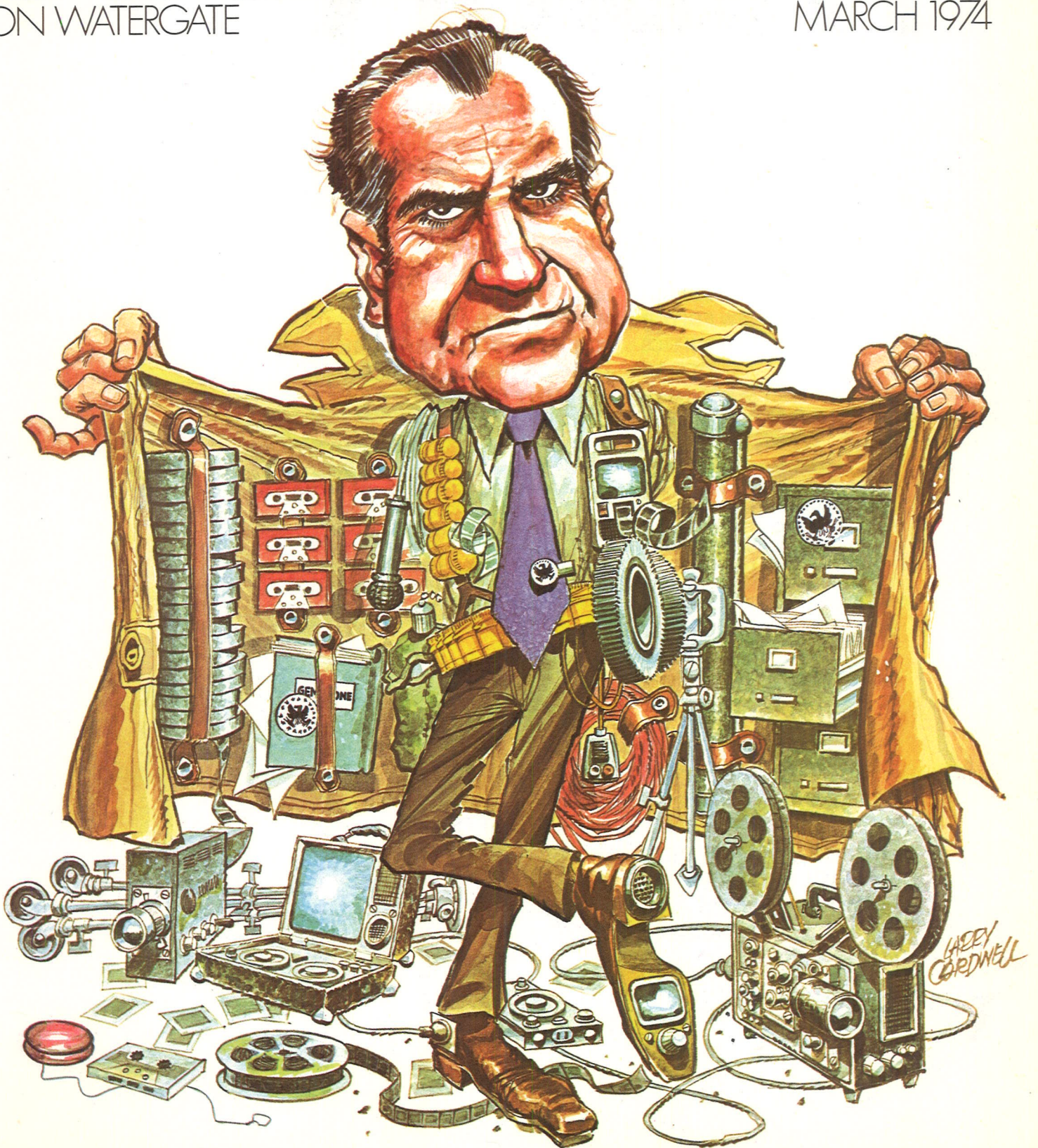
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MISSION

ON WATERGATE

MARCH 1974



MISSION

MARCH, 1974 VOLUME 7, NUMBER 9

"...TO EXPLORE THOROUGHLY THE SCRIPTURES AND THEIR MEANING ... TO UNDERSTAND AS FULLY AS POSSIBLE THE WORLD IN WHICH THE CHURCH LIVES AND HAS HER MISSION ... TO PROVIDE A VEHICLE FOR COMMUNICATING THE MEANING OF GOD'S WORD TO OUR CONTEMPORARY WORLD."

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FROM THE EDITOR

In the Beginning

AND THE WORD of the Lord came to me: "Son of man, say to her, you are a land that is not cleansed, or rained upon in the day of indignation. Her princes in the midst of her are like a roaring lion tearing the prey; they have devoured human lives; they have taken treasure and precious things; they have made many widows in the midst of her. Her priests have done violence to my law and have profaned my holy things; they have made no distinction between the holy and the common, neither have they taught the difference between the unclean and the clean, and they have disregarded my sabbaths, so that I am profaned among them. Her princes in the midst of her are like wolves tearing the prey, shedding blood, destroying lives to get dishonest gain. And her prophets have daubed for them with whitewash, seeing false visions and divining lies for them, saying, 'Thus says the Lord God,' when the Lord has not spoken. The people of the land have practiced extortion and committed robbery; they have oppressed the poor and needy, and have extorted from the sojourner without redress. And I sought for a man among them who should build up the wall and stand in the breach before me for the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found none. Therefore, I have poured out my indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath; their way have I requited upon their heads, says the Lord God. Ezekiel 22:23-31

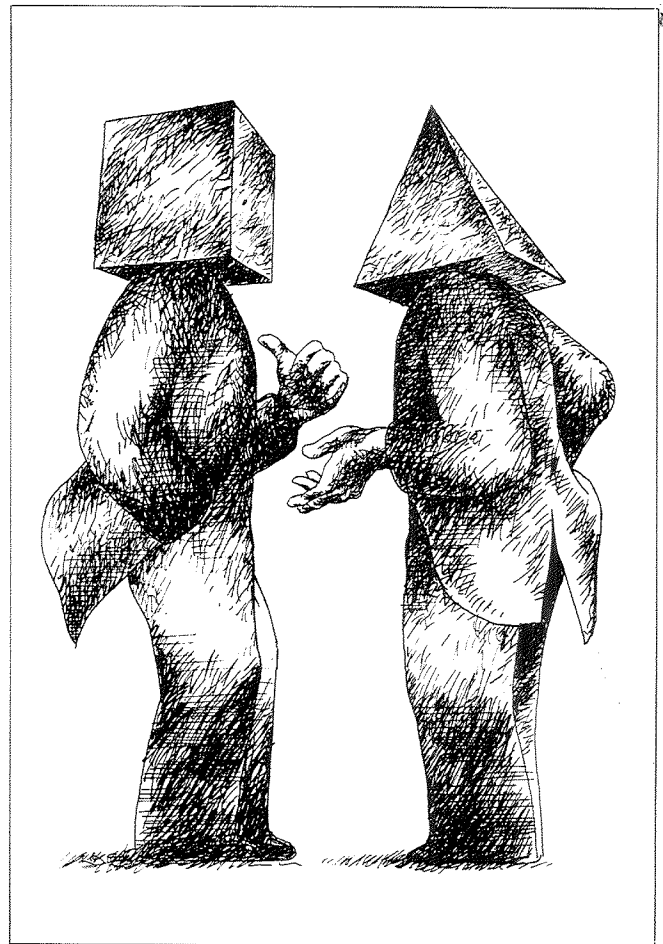
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There are times the Bible reads like a newspaper and we are living in such times. The social, political and religious sins of Jerusalem stand under the judgment of God in Ezekiel 22. The social, political and religious sins of Washington D.C. no less escape that judgment in 1974. Therefore, the prophetic word comes again, "I have poured out my indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath; their way have I requited upon their heads, says the Lord God."

Our nation is sick at heart. If we can believe George Gallup there is a major crisis of confidence at every level of our society. Language in the political arena has been so subverted it has become

meaningless. We do not know who or what to believe. There has been a failure, in the language of Ezekiel, of our princes, our prophets, our priests and our people.

"Watergate" has become the code word used to describe the diagnosis of our national sickness. It stands for far more than an isolated event occurring on the streets of Washington D.C., June 17, 1972. It stands for what happens to the heart of a nation in the midst of political corruption and spiritual power failure. *Mission* believes Watergate involves more than a political problem. It involves a question of national conscience—and from our point of view—one that must be addressed from a Christian perspective.



CRISIS IN AMERICAN POLITICS

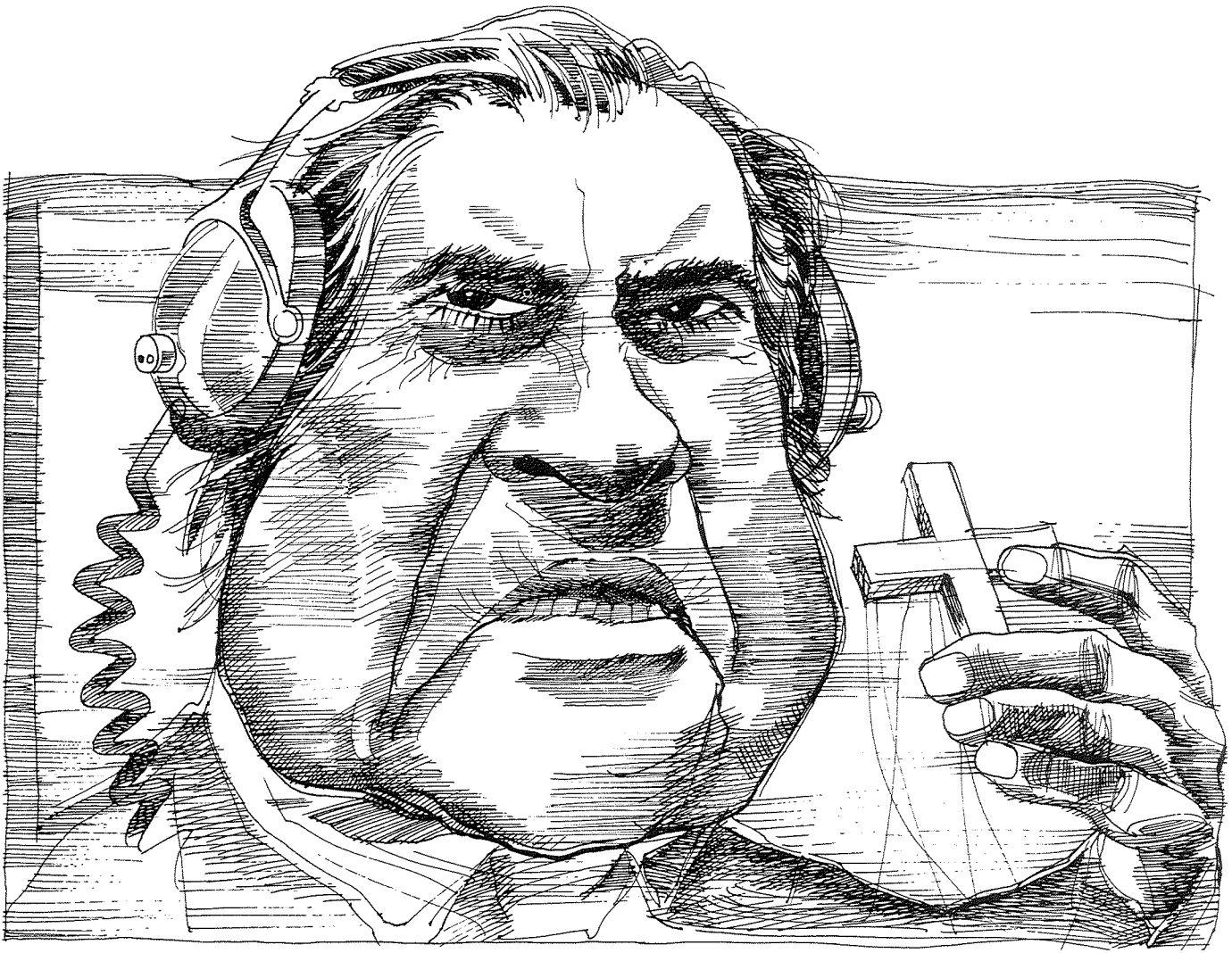
REFLECTIONS ON WATERGATE AND THE REST OF THE ICEBERG

BY PERRY C. COTHAM

"Power tends to expand indefinitely, and will transcend all barriers, abroad and at home, until met by superior forces. . . . Among all the causes which degrade and demoralize men, power is the most constant and the most active. . . . I cannot accept . . . that we are to judge Pope and King unlike other men, with a favorable presumption that they did no wrong. If there is any presumption it is the other way against holders of power, increasing as the power increases. Historic responsibility has to make up for the want of legal responsibility. Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men, even when they exercise influence and not authority: still more when you superadd the tendency or the certainty of corruption by authority. There is no worse heresy than that the office sanctifies the holder of it."

Lord Acton

"If one man is allowed to determine for himself what is law, every man can. That means first chaos, then tyranny." Mr. Justice Frankfurter



"There is nothing covered up that will not be uncovered, nothing hidden that will not be made known. You may take it, then, that everything you have said in the dark will be heard in broad daylight, and what you have whispered behind closed doors will be shouted from the house-tops."

Jesus

"The tendency is for an administration to run out of steam after the first four years and then to coast and to usually coast downhill."

Richard M. Nixon (1972)

June 17, 1972. A date long to be remembered by historians of the American experience as truly a "day of infamy." Some political commentators may well record that it was the official date of the death of both American public idealism and unwavering faith in her public institutions and officials. If pinpointing such a date is possible, the death arrived after a lingering coma, deepened by a resurgence of political violence, the quagmire of Vietnam, racial conflicts, a spiraling crime rate and

urban riots, the streets of Chicago, My Lai, and Kent State. What happened on this date, of course, is that seven men (two on the Committee to Re-Elect the President) were apprehended inside the Democratic campaign quarters of the Watergate hotel complex for theft and bugging activities. Senator McGovern attempted unsuccessfully to exploit this issue to gain stature in the voters' eyes, but most of the electorate seemed to dismiss the whole matter as "just politics." But soon after the inauguration, startling charges and details began to surface bit by bit with almost blitzkrieg speed. We soon learned that the Watergate break-in itself was only the tip of an ice-berg. Submerged were seemingly innumerable admitted and untried allegations of sundry subterfuge, illegalities, and improprieties—so much below the surface that most observers would concur with Senator Baker

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that the full revelation of what has happened in the last four or five years will not and, with much destruction of records and evidence, *cannot* be known. For awhile, Americans could not believe it, and then they could not ignore it, and were angry about it, and now they may be receding into what James Reston calls a kind of "protective feeble cynicism."

The Watergate revelations have created a new crisis in American politics. Some will counter that crisis is too strong a term for our contemporary situation. Indeed, our time has seen a proclivity for overgeneralization: terms like "unprecedented," "super," and "crisis" are vastly overworked in American semantics. But when, excepting the Civil War, has the nation ever been as confused, disillusioned, and cynical about our political system and the officials who are granted public trust? There are many indices to this crisis. National polls reported at the end of 1973 that Americans have more faith in the veracity of their garbageman than their representatives. A Congressionally-sponsored poll discovered as far back as last September that 53 percent of Americans felt there was "something deeply wrong in America today" and even more people felt that "people running the country don't really care what happens to you." In response to the query, "What are our biggest problems?" inflation was first with 64 percent and lack of integrity in government was second with 43 percent; crime was next with 17 percent and thirteen other possibilities received less than 15 percent.¹ A poll of political scientists revealed that disillusionment with politics is running wide and deep; almost all the professors surveyed believe there is a "crisis in confidence" that will continue for several years and that the Watergate-Agnew cases have reduced both the power and especially the prestige of the Presidency.²

¹ This poll is reported in a 342 page study conducted by polltaker Louis Harris for the Senate subcommittee on intergovernmental relations and is reported in *Newsweek*, December 10, 1973, pp. 40, 45, 48. It shows the shadow of alienation cutting across class, racial, and regional lines and documents the fact that public trust in the leaders of most American institutions—from major business concerns to organized religion to the U.S. military establishment—has fallen off significantly since 1966.

² This poll was conducted for *U.S. News and World Report* and reported in the December 3, 1973, issue. A plurality of the political scientists believed that the scandals reflected a serious letdown in political ethics in America, but a good many contended that most politicians are more honest and responsible than ever before and that, in the words of one, "Nixon's people are a throwback to the past." In fact, the political scientists expressed great faith in the American system—more than is sometimes heard from the "man on the street."

No space will be taken here to refute a charge that Christian concern over this matter is getting the church involved in politics.³ No political action can be divorced absolutely from its moral implications since it seeks to change or preserve the status quo in one way or another. Christians no less than anyone else should seek to encourage the process of justice, foster a renewed respect for the law, and preserve the constitutional system itself. Further, no purpose is served by providing an historical chronicling and sketches of the various events and personalities ensconced in the mire of Watergate corruption and if it were this article would be dated by the time it reaches the editor's desk. What is justified, indeed what is *imperative*, is that we place this crisis in the context of genuine Biblical morality. This leads us naturally to ask, "What does Watergate and the rest of the iceberg mean from a theological perspective? What are the issues it raises and with what resources may Christians grapple with these issues? How should Christians respond? What does Watergate tell us about our nation and ourselves?" These are not easy questions! Anyone responding to them may tend to move to one extreme or the other. And he certainly cannot escape his own biases, theological premises, or political ideology. Watergate has raised a plethora of issues and produced a welter of considered opinion, but I have chosen to deal with four broad issue-areas of concern and then look briefly at four solution-areas. This commentary is offered to the readers of *Mission* for initiating dialogue and providing the insight and perspective of one Christian observer.

The chief theological issue of Watergate is that of the twin pitfalls of pride and idolatry—the worship of self and false gods. Unlike so many previous political scandals, the false god was not money or property. Nor was it merely prestige, though prestige was a pretty by-product, to be sure. In this case the false god was personal power—power for the central occupant of the White House and power for his bumbling cadre of advisors, PR men, advertising agents, and confidants who, in pre-Watergate days,

³ It is interesting that there seems to be a dearth of serious comment about recent political corruption in brotherhood periodicals and papers. There are some brief laments about a declining trust in public leaders and institutions but specificity about Watergate seems generally to be limited to little innocuous tidbits, such as the mention of "Watergate" in the Bible (Nehemiah 8:1).

were virtually faceless, nameless and certainly interchangeable and whose own power both emanated from and depended on *his* personal power. The exercise of political power involves authority, sovereignty, and the right to control the destiny of one's self and perhaps millions of others. For some, the mantle of power produces a deep sense of humility and responsibility; for others it produces arrogance and an obsession with one's lofty position, sometimes accompanied by desperate tactics to prevent any erosion of that power. Watergate is simply another illustration of the latter. In the study of man, it is a footnote documenting the forever persistent pressure to make one's own self and one's in-group the very center of existence with the subsequent haughtiness and the exercise and abuse of power it engenders. This kind of pride is nothing new; it is original sin.

In the body politic, pride and the lust for power in a democracy lead to three closely related but separately devastating conditions affecting both the power holders and their subjects.

Distorted sense of values

(1) A distorted sense of values and virtues. For worshippers of the false god of power, the only important matter is the exaltation of the self and of the self's extension, the tiny in-group of power-sharers. Why were plans for political espionage drafted? And, after they were bungled, why did their originators move quickly to keep the conniving covered? The answer is simple—keeping the present incumbent in office was the most important if not the *only* value. The highly legitimate concern for “national security” came to be slighted in favor of “Nixon security.” In fact, the two “securities” were so entwined that one can imagine Nixon's henchmen actually believing the assumption that the success of the President was equivalent to the prosperity and even the security of the Republic. Perpetuation of the current regime at nearly all available costs came to be a higher political virtue than the perpetuation of this regime through the normal democratic processes. It is a matter of party in the narrowest sense over principle in the highest sense. This administration, dedicated foremost to the accommodating principle of self-perpetuation, did not exist for the people of the United States. The people of the United States existed for it. This doctrine is essentially a revival of the “fuehrer” or “leader” principle of Nazi Germany.

If this sounds too much like an overgeneralization, one need only glance at the evidence sub-

mitted by principle witnesses in the Watergate hearings. When confronted with what former Attorney General John Mitchell himself termed the “White House horrors,” he told the nation, “I still believe that the most important thing to this country was the re-election of Richard Nixon and I was not about to countenance anything [specifically exposure of the Watergate coverup] that would stand in the way of that re-election.” Herbert Porter, an official of CREEP, who had already confessed to perjury in the coverup, continued: “I have been guilty of a deep sense of loyalty to the President of the United States. . . . I was appealed to on that basis.” And then there is Jeb Magruder, deputy director of CREEP, who secretly offers to take the rap for Watergate because he “honestly thought” that if Mitchell and others were implicated, Mr. Nixon's “re-election would probably be negated.” The admitted policy is easily clear: the “fuehrer principle” required that justice be obstructed, the crime kept covered, the voting public be deceived, and the leader be kept in power at all necessary costs. (We shall have more to say about ends and means later).

Undermining of constitutional principles

(2) An undermining of constitutional principles and democratic rights. We refer here to the conscious action of agents perpetuating and furthering the leader principle. All power regimes rest upon some combination of consent and coercion; even the most totalitarian form of government must have some degree of public support, if only acquiescence, in order to exist. The lust for political power leads to divers methods of influencing public opinion. There is nothing necessarily wrong with this, of course, but the crucial threat to a democratic system comes when legitimate methods of control are supplemented first by improper and then illegal manipulation.

Problem: When strong protest arises over the President's saturation bombing in Indochina, the President's war policies need to be made to appear winning wide public support. *Solution:* the CREEP sends out thousands of telegrams in support of Mr. Nixon.

Problem: After the administration loses an important Supreme Court decision on the Pentagon Papers case and publication cannot be legally halted, there is a need to discredit the source of this revelation in the minds of the general public. *Solution:* Break into the office of Dr. Lewis Fielding, Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist, in order to

steal information that might discredit Ellsberg in his pending trial. Never mind that the civil rights of Dr. Fielding are violated, not to mention the "confidentiality" (in this case between doctor and patient) that our President so doggedly defended in his determined battle to withhold his tape-recorded conversations from the Court.

Problem: Certain Democratic candidates may pose a threat to the President's re-election. The *solution* here depends on the candidate. In the case of Edward Kennedy, the response is "doctoring" state department documents to fabricate clear and direct evidence of his brother's complicity in the death of Vietnamese President Diem. In the cases of Senators Humphrey and Jackson, it means stealing stationery from Edmund Muskie and distributing a letter accusing his party colleagues of sexual misconduct. It is no defense to urge that the political practices here constitute a relatively minor infringement upon civil liberties that did not materially affect the election outcome. History has shown all too frequently that the encroachment on human freedom that one day is a trickling stream may all too soon become a raging torrent.

The campaign to control public opinion takes, at least from the Christian perspective, another dangerous direction—the prostitution and corruption of language. The exploitation of human language for partisan political purposes is nothing new, of course, but it seems to have been accelerated under the present administration. From the last two administrations that escalated and perpetuated the "undeclared war" in Vietnam, the public mind was desensitized with the novocaine of "defoliation program" for systematic destruction of crops and forests, "pacification" and "peace-keeping action" for mass expulsion of natives and destruction of remaining life, "interdiction," "protective reaction strikes," and "air support for carpet bombing." It is only natural that in the last months we have heard breaking and entering called "intelligence-gathering operations," burglars called "plumbers," and administration-sponsored crime called "White House horrors." Terms like these and "dirty tricks," "laundered money," "puffing," "inoperative," "misspoke," "telephone anomalies"—all perform the same function in the public imagination and perception: the separation of words from truth. Months before the Watergate story broke, William Stringfellow, noted ethicist and theologian, declared that the corruption of language is "the species of violence most militant in the present American circumstances."

That violence is babel: the inversion of language, verbal inflation, defamation, euphemism and coded phrases, rhetorical

wantonness, redundancy, such profusion in speech and sound that comprehension is impaired, jargon, noise, nonsense, incoherence, hyperbole, libel, rumor, a chaos of voices and tongues, falsehood.⁴

Cover-up

(3) A widening circle of errors that are committed and then covered in desperate action to prevent any erosion of power. That men who idolize power feel constrained to act indiscreetly and/or illegally when that power is threatened is evident. And the person who commits one indiscretion or illegal act to maintain the in-group's power can with even less pang of conscience justify another and then another similar act to cover up the original violation.

The Watergate actors would have profited from another reading of the Bible which many professed to have studied so devoutly in earlier days. One popular Old Testament story that comes to mind involves David and Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11). One restless evening, King David gets out of bed, walks upon the roof of the "executive mansion" where he spots a beautiful woman bathing. He calls for her and the result of this sinful liaison is an undesired pregnancy. The King is in a squeeze, not only as the political leader of a powerful nation but more importantly as the moral leader of God's chosen people. The King is more concerned with mollifying public opinion than in effecting repentance and God's forgiveness, for indeed the law required that the adulterer be stoned. David believes his power and moral authority depend upon his successfully covering-up what he has done. He gives the word to his right-hand man Joab (an equivalent to Haldeman or Ehrlichman?) that Bathsheba's husband, Uriah the Hittite, must be summoned from the battlefield. When David confers with Uriah he demanded of him "how Joab did, and how the people did, and how the war prospered." ("The President began asking me a number of leading questions, which made me think that the conversation was being taped.") Obviously the King's real purpose was not to inquire about the war; after all, he had his own intelligence system. David wanted to "feel out" Uriah. David commands Uriah to go home "and there followed him a mess of meat from the King." Here is a clear

⁴ William Stringfellow, "Must the Stones Cry Out?" *Christianity and Crisis*, XXXII (October 30, 1972), 235. In his classic essay, *Politics and the English Language*, George Orwell noted: "If thought corrupts language, language can also corrupt thought. . . . Political chaos is connected with the decay of language, and . . . one can probably bring about some improvement by starting at the verbal end."

case of bribery. But Uriah is a man of principle who refuses to be compromised, even when ordered by the King himself; Uriah refuses to be diverted from his earlier commitment of military victory. David then coaxes Uriah to remain an extra day for a meal in which he gets Uriah intoxicated, but again, David's scheming is foiled by this man's principles. In desperation the King uses his position as Commander-in-chief to order Uriah sent to the forefront of the hottest battle, a delicate operation enshrouded in the deepest secrecy. The cover-up is finally accomplished, or so David thinks. When word of the good man's death is delivered to the King by unsuspecting messengers, he indifferently offers cold comfort: "Let not this thing displease thee, for the sword devoureth one as well as another." ("Both our parties have been guilty of such tacts. The campaign excesses have occurred on all sides.")

The point may be implied that King David and Richard Nixon are parallel in certain important details. This is not necessarily so. At this writing the President's precise involvement in Watergate scandals is yet to be legally established. But the lesson from the Bible is clear and Watergate and the rest of the iceberg is only another of many illustrations of it. The idolatry of pride and power easily lead men to irrational and radical behavior to retain that power and each misdirected step can easily escalate into many others.⁵ We may be grateful that in a constitutional system the people may employ the forms of law in checking the abuse of public power.



related theological issue emerging from Watergate is man's persistent

⁵ A sizable group of hard-core Nixon supporters in this Watergate fiasco has maintained that Nixon had no knowledge whatsoever of the planning and cover-up of the scandalous acts employed to keep him in power. This theory is plausible if one can see the President as being totally deceived by his closest and most trusted advisors and assistants. To many this is unlikely, but certainly possible. Another story in the Old Testament involving David shows how a top official's aids may deceive him. David loved Absalom and wanted him spared. An unnamed witness saw Absalom entangled in the thick of an oak tree but on orders of the King refused to kill him. David's close advisor asked him why he didn't kill Absalom and receive the reward Joab would offer. The man informed Joab that he (Joab) would, in the presence of an inquisitive King, turn against him and confess to no part in the plot. Joab, the King's chief aid, doesn't argue with this explanation; he simply takes three darts and proceeds to kill Absalom himself (see 2 Samuel 18:1-17).

tendency to confuse ends and means. No one would deny for a moment that the re-election of the incumbent President was a valid and legitimate end. Despite all the dissent from war protesters and from liberals who found administration policies out of line with their ideologies, Richard Nixon was truly the candidate of the great "silent majority" having reason to believe he could have defeated any Democratic candidate. No one can deny the right of any campaign staff to make a probable victory as certain as possible. This certainly includes extensive information-gathering and planning and executing campaign strategy designed to make "our man" look as good as possible and "their man" to look as undesirable as possible. The real issue here involves what means may be used to accomplish a stated goal.

A great deal of the religious comment that has been offered on this issue has drawn, perhaps very effectively, a moral link connecting the social upheaval of the 60's (including the anti-war protest movement, the direct action of Martin Luther King, Jr., and draft resistance), the Chappaquiddick tragedy, the Daniel Ellsberg case, and the Watergate participants. These commentators have taken their lead from the President himself. In his April 30 address, Nixon seemed to lay the blame on advisors "whose zeal exceeded their judgment, and who may have done wrong in a cause they deeply believed to be right." In his address of August 15, he asked Americans to "look at Watergate in a longer perspective."

We can see that its abuses resulted from the assumption by those involved that their cause placed them beyond the reach of those rules that apply to other persons and that hold a free society together. That attitude can never be tolerated in our country. However, it did not suddenly develop in 1972. It became fashionable in the 1960's, as individuals and groups increasingly asserted the right to take the law into their own hands, insisting that their purposes represented a higher morality. Then, their attitude was praised in the press, and even from some of our pulpits, as evidence of a new idealism. . . . That same attitude brought a rising spiral of violence and fear, of riots and arson and bombing, all in the name of peace and in the name of justice.

In his appearance before the Watergate committee, Jeb Stuart Magruder forwarded the same logic with a calculated reference to his old college ethics teacher, Yale's Chaplain William Sloane Coffin. While humbly confessing his personal guilt in

planning and covering certain acts, Magruder cites Coffin's philosophy of situation ethics and anti-war activities as doctrine and inspiration for his own illegal involvement. "I saw people I was very close to breaking the law without any regard for any other person's pattern of behavior or belief." Magruder further recalled Coffin advocating "students burn their draft cards and . . . have mass demonstrations."

One could easily make a strong case for the thesis that our nation has experienced an unnecessary siege of direct action labeled "civil disobedience." The Watergate actors were not the first to go astray by a misguided form of moral zeal. Our history is dotted with crusaders like some of our early revolutionaries, John Brown, and perhaps a Lee Harvey Oswald or Arthur Bremer, who identify their beliefs with ultimate truth and then feel free to defy any law in their defense. The Old Testament's Phinehas is an example of such self-absolutizing zeal. But in a democracy, where people who must abide by the law presumably have been consulted and have legal channels through which to express their protests and work for reform, there can be no "legal" right for anyone to disobey the law. Some political scientists have defined democracy as a system whose aim is to provide alternatives to civil disobedience.

What Christians must uphold, however, is a *moral* right to disobey a law. This moral right transcends the domain of civil and statutory law and emanates from "higher law" or "natural truth." The Bible supplies a number of examples of such civil disobedience: Moses following Jehovah's commands rather than Pharaoh's wishes, the refusal of Daniel and also Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to obey the laws of Nebuchadnezzar, Jesus pulling an ear of corn on the sabbath, to Peter and John explaining why they cannot obey the Sanhedrin's order to desist from preaching Christ ("We ought to obey God rather than men.").

Do Nixon, Magruder, and the White House legal staff really believe that all of these cases of illegal activity can be lumped together solely because of a common denominator of the law being broken or is this some sort of forensic jugglery concocted to relieve the pressure on the administration by an already distraught and confused public? To insist that all were equally reprehensible before the law and in the sight of God would be a most myopic and distorted view of genuine Biblical morality. Disobedience that is morally justified must aim at repealing an unjust law; ideally it is that unjust law itself that the dissenter seeks to disobey. *But most important, it is essential to the purpose of the*

conscientious dissenter who finds his political circumstances and moral convictions incompatible that both the public and the government know what he is doing. If the illegal action is clandestinely committed and later feverishly covered up, there is no way the public conscience can be sensitized to the moral issue and no way the law's constitutionality can be tested. Many members of the civil rights and peace movement followed the noblest traditions of civil disobedience by openly and symbolically disobeying unjust laws that perpetuated official racism and by protesting a war they believed both immorally conducted and constitutionally illegal. To equate, on the one hand, a public symbolic act designed to challenge and reinterpret the law in harmony with higher justice and with such advocates willing to accept society's penalty with, on the other hand, the private breaking of laws for the sole purpose of keeping one man in office is unthinkable!⁶ The passive mind prefers to lump all these acts together. Watergate offers Christians a challenge—the chal-

⁶ Commenting on his former student, Dr. Coffin has stated, "However pathetic our antiwar efforts were, we were trying to keep the nation under law or under God, while Jeb and his cohorts were trying to keep it under Nixon." *Time*, June 25, 1973, p. 13.

I have not dealt with Ellsberg and Chappaquiddick, two cases which are cited frequently by administration defenders. I believe Ellsberg's action to be very much within the tradition of civil disobedience. Those convicted in the Watergate case were caught red-handed within the premises of the Democratic National Committee, with the tools of crime in hand. Ellsberg used his legitimate access to the Pentagon Papers to photocopy (which may or may not legally be stealing since the papers were returned) certain documents and inform the public opinion about a war our tax money was funding. True, the papers were government secrets, but if the same stiff regulations were applied to, say, military heroes who use similar documents in compiling their memoirs, there would be scores of violators. Ellsberg did attempt to employ other channels open to him before releasing the documents to the newspapers. When he had achieved his purpose, he admitted what he had done and surrendered to the authorities to face the consequences. Even had Ellsberg been convicted of a crime, he still would have acted in what he thought was the public interest. Ellsberg critics should ask themselves if it is not so much the style in which the Pentagon Papers were made public so much as it was the substance of what was revealed.

The Edward Kennedy and Chappaquiddick incident appears similar to Watergate in one basic respect—public confidence in our leaders is impaired when there is strong evidence of a cover-up of improper deeds. The nature of Senator Kennedy's involvement with Mary Jo Kopechne—a matter of great interest and speculation among "religious" people—should be of precious little if any relevance to the voting public. What is important is whether Kennedy

lenge to sharpen our insights and consciences in making moral distinctions and to hold firmly to a belief in an ethical standard rooted in an authority higher than that of an elective office.

A

nother vital issue raised by Watergate is the vivid exposure of the sharp contrast between outward virtue and the inner corruption of individuals and in-groups. One of the chief pitfalls of conservative and fundamentalist churches is that we have had a distorted view of sin. Individual sin is easily perceived and easily condemned; corporate and social sin is much more complex, more baffling and consequently not easily perceived and often ignored. This leads to a division of life into neat little pre-packaged categories with the labels of society, business, politics, and religion with the preacher receiving a mandate to probe publicly only matters ecclesiastical. Thus, to speak out fervently against lust toward that mini-skirted office flirt is scriptural; equal condemnation of high official corruption in our government, deceptive advertising, corporate price-fixing, or excessive profiteering is getting the church involved in "politics." The flag-burning, draft-record destruction, or disruption of public order by dissenters is easily perceived as violence. The use of legal means and loop holes to "keep blacks in their place," pad expense accounts, avoid equitable taxation, or squelch even peaceful dissent is overlooked if not defended in the name of "law 'n order."

The myopia of this moral calculus is nowhere better illustrated than in the Watergate scandals. When he faces the public, Nixon is the silent majority's proclaimer of noble ideals and old-fashioned individual virtues. He is the moralizer, the faithful son of Quaker parents and Quaker values, who is duty bound to use the White House pulpit in order to summon the people back to their ethical and religious idealism. He uses the vocabulary of theology—faith, trust, belief, and spirit—about as much as the lingo of football and baseball, but applies this terminology not to God or Christianity but to his own nation and, more dangerous, to his personal policies and visions. In seeking the Presidency in 1968, Nixon was seemingly honestly convinced that the individual citizen obeyed the law after the accident and if he told the truth to his constituents and an interested nation. Whatever else may be said about the Chappaquiddick accident, it was a civil matter that did not involve tampering with the democratic processes.

zens of this nation were being led down a path of individual moral degradation. (This is not in any way to imply that his diagnosis was incorrect or hypocritical; perhaps the torrents of degradation were too great for one man, even in the highest office in the land, to halt.) With little quantifiable effect, these premises were acted upon early. His administration openly repudiates and castigates the findings and recommendations of congressional commissions on coping with the problems of drug abuse and obscenity; supporters of these well-documented studies are labeled "permissive" or even radicals. Administration recommendations for the greatly needed welfare system reform, as well as sentiments expressed regarding labor generally, are couched in terms honoring the long-established individual virtues of the "work ethic," thriftiness and sobriety. His occasional deliberations on abortion also reflect his "personal belief in the sanctity of human life," although on the issue of capital punishment, this concern was eclipsed by faith in its role in halting serious crime in America. And as for crime in America, no administration has spoken out as eloquently against courts coddling criminals and on the need for more respect for law and order than the current one. The irony, of course, is that the administration's speakers bureau is continually turning over, with the chief preacher of law and order, Spiro Agnew, now departed from the public scene, and, at this writing, Dwight Chapin having made the 18th administration official to be indicted as a result of Watergate and related scandals.

Now Nixon's tender concern for saving the lives of human embryos, gaining an edge in the fight against crime, keeping filth off our newsstands and the rest is both good and proper. A return to individual responsibility and virtue has long been and is still needed. And even the best of us cannot practice perfectly what we preach. But can Christians afford the luxury of silence when so flagrant inconsistency between professed ideals and both open and secret action is foisted upon the public? What about the administration's adamant refusal to recognize officially the pleas of churchmen and other conscience-stricken citizens who spoke out for the victims of the 1972 Christmas carpet bombing of Vietnam? And what about the secret bombing of Cambodia? On what authority under law did the President direct the Pentagon and State Department to conduct 3,630 B-52 raids and drop more than 100,000 tons of bombs on Cambodia? Further, by what moral authority did Nixon have, not simply to withhold vital information about how our tax money was spent and war conducted in our name, but to go out of his way in a special televised address (April 30, 1970) to boast that we

were respecting the neutrality of a friendly nation. In the midst of this fourteen month bombing campaign the President claims in reference to those "privileged sanctuaries in Cambodia," that "for five years, neither the United States nor South Vietnam has moved against those enemy sanctuaries because we did not wish to violate the territory of a neutral nation." This was a deliberate and knowing lie, broadcast by the highest official of our nation. Should a positive virtue be made out of a falsehood?

Not only does the Nixon theology place emphasis on pietism to the slighting of Christian social ethics, it has frequently stressed style over substance and appearances for reality. Mr. Nixon astutely recognizes the political merits of maintaining his alliance with Billy "the-Bible-says" Graham, certainly America's most influential religious leader and to many "the high priest of American civil religion." Mr. Graham invites Nixon to speak at his revival services, appears himself at inaugural festivities, preaches in the East Room worship services, and attends White House social events. In essence, Billy Graham is White House chaplain, or, in Old Testament theology, the court prophet. Unlike most prominent religious leaders of the world, Graham has never once raised a question about the justice of the war or the morality of its conduct. He has been unyielding in this silence despite the continued pressure of American church leaders to wield a restraining influence with Johnson or Nixon. One recalls the time when the Ray Conniff orchestra and chorus were entertaining the President and his guests at a dinner honoring the editors of the *Reader's Digest* and one member of the group, Carol Feraci, quietly stepped forward and made a brief, politely spoken appeal to the President to "stop bombing human beings, animals and vegetation. You go to church on Sunday and pray to Jesus Christ. If Jesus Christ was in this room you would not dare to drop another bomb." Miss Feraci was immediately asked to leave the show. Afterward, Graham remarked to a reporter that her comment "was very rude." But perhaps her brief appeal was more in the tradition of God's prophets, who seemingly used every opportunity to call people back to God and social justice, than the preacher's rebuff. One recalls how the priest Amaziah, who served the King, tried to threaten the prophet Amos into silence.

The Nixon-Graham silent majority coalition wants prayers returned to our public schools. Certainly their motivation is sincere and to be respected, but not the spurious argument that this society is plagued by sexual perversion and permissiveness, drugs, pornography, bribery, and alcohol-

ism, simply because we've gone a decade without public school praying. Do we really believe that while Americans cannot pray enough at worship or in the privacy of their homes to halt these serious problems that returning to a practice of dubious constitutionality and thus adding the trappings of formal religion can, *in and of itself*, restore integrity, decency and quality to public affairs?

This administration has returned formal religion to the White House with some forty worship services conducted there up to April 15, 1973. Are we to deduce anything from the fact that some of the most shameful, immoral and illegal behavior in the history of American politics was planned, carried out and covered up in and around the White House at the very time these highly publicized gestures toward God and righteousness were being made? Of course no one will argue that festooning the White House with religious ritual was in any sense a causative factor in Watergate. But the words of Amos seem apropos: "I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. . . . But let justice roll down like water and righteousness like an everflowing stream."

The men in the most legal difficulty over Watergate would be the least suspected. The stereotype is that of a man of good taste and manners, handsome, clean-cut (usually with short hair), conservatively attired, athletic, and religious. Egil Krogh is described by friends as "straight arrow." John Dean tells the press that he still says his evening prayers and relates that at one time he planned to enter the Episcopalian ministry. Presumably scrupulous about all aspects of private morality (he is both a teetotaler, rare among politicians, and a practicing Christian Scientist), John Ehrlichman lashes out haughtily at those who would not concur that the President's men had a right to expose the sexual aberrations and drinking habits of an unworthy competitor for office even if this meant suspending certain of the Bill of Rights. How far removed is this from the Pharisee in the temple who celebrated his own righteousness and scorned the sinful tax collector?

Watergate challenges us, not to denigrate the importance of private morality, but to see again that Christian ethics are essentially social ethics—one cannot truly be in right relationship to God unless he is in right relationship to his fellowman. To convince ourselves that those whose shortcomings are being exposed constitute only a handful among a righteous majority would be the ultimate tragedy. Politicians reflect the prevailing morality of their times and the public gets the morality it demands. If we as a self-proclaimed Christian

nation can see ourselves reflected in Watergate, a demand for harsh penalties may be replaced by real penitence and a sincere search for ways to amend what must be changed in our society. Watergate can have some saving grace. But the voice of the church must be clear and strong.



fourth issue involves the vital importance of our public leaders fulfilling their responsibility as moral leaders as well as political leaders. Under any form of government, and at any time and place, the exercise of political leadership is by and large the exercise of moral leadership. This moral leadership, whether good or bad, is unavoidable. Quantitative studies in political socialization have established that images of the role and importance of God and the President are mingled in the minds of pre-school and early elementary school children. Excepting possibly the Supreme Court, no institution plays so important a symbolic role in American political life than the American presidency; particularly in times of crisis or stress, the President symbolizes the nation. Watergate summons once again our political leaders to acknowledge the influence they possess for good or evil and encourages them to be good stewards of available time and opportunity. "Where a man has been given much," Jesus declares, "much will be expected of him; and the more a man has had entrusted to him the more he will be required to pay."

This moral leadership transcends all political labels and partisan policies. Recent political history has seen a misleading exploitation of labels and catch-phrases. Nixon campaigned in 1968 as a "strict constructionist," but the continued expansion of war powers begun under Johnson, the legal argument forwarded by his lawyers to withhold his tapes from the courts, as well as other stances of lesser import, constitute an unorthodox version of strict constructionism. In the election campaign of '72, much ado was made over one candidate being a conservative and the other being a radical. But when one looks now at both the issues and the campaign tactics designed to win their public acceptance, the labels are misnomers. No political camp has a monopoly on truth or integrity; the doctrinaire of both always needs careful re-examination. If conservatives have been too willing to skimp their traditional support for individual rights in their overriding concern for law and order and in fighting communism, so must liberals acknowledge they may also slight individual rights in their desire

for the style of social reform that is achieved mainly by concentrating much more power in the hands of the national executive. If liberals lament the abuse of executive power, honesty demands admission it was mostly strong, liberal Presidents who did the most to expand the office to its present stature. The best interests of our nation are served by an Americanism that welcomes the constructive criticism of conservatives, liberals, and moderates alike without attaching a moral crusade to the views of any one camp or party.

This moral leadership includes a wholesale respect for the law and legal institutions. Without a respect for law and public order, any democratic system is doomed to failure. Though the President is elected by a national ballot and is the one single representative of all the people, he neither embodies the nation's sovereignty nor is above the law's demands; sovereignty resides in the people and is exercised according to established forms of law. A public official or an administration should do more than leave the impression that the law is obeyed only when there are no other alternatives. The standard of conduct must go beyond simply being above criminal guilt but include being above suspicion. It's a sad commentary on the state of American politics when a Vice President must call a press conference to announce, "I have full confidence in the integrity of the President," or for the President himself to declare to the nation (November 17, 1973), "I'm not a crook."

If the law is not respected among the high and mighty, the effects upon the fabric of public morality and decency will be devastating. The sixth and final report of the National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals acknowledged surveys showing the public believes government corruption is widespread. The Commission concluded that "most people in public service are honest and dedicated," but added that official corruption "results in a staggering cost to the American taxpayer, and the existence of corruption breeds further crime by providing for the citizen a model of official lawlessness that undermines any acceptable rule of law." This confirms Mr. Justice Brandeis' statement that "crime is contagious." Indeed, what encouragement is it to boys entering the soap box derby not to skirt regulations in constructing their machine when church leaders dismiss political corruption with the quip, "Everybody's doing it; Nixon's boys just happened to get caught."? How can teachers fulfill their responsibilities of teaching young people the moral, ethical and spiritual values basic to the success of a free society if highly placed officials disregard the nation's traditional concern

for high standards of morality? What incentive is there for the little man to be honest in filing his income tax return when he learns that the independent IRS has been used to retaliate against someone's political "enemies"?

Perhaps most important, moral leadership means facing and telling the truth. Perhaps no incident in our history has produced such an orgy of finger-pointing and buck-passing than this Watergate incident. But the importance of truth in larger contexts has been denied because of our love for self-delusion. Some believed the "realism" of our long involvement in the jungles and rice paddies of Vietnam, our complicity in atrocities like My Lai, and official lies forwarded by the Pentagon and retracted (but not apologized for) only when reporters uncovered too much indicting evidence—all of this brought into American living rooms via the mass media—would at least educate the American conscience in its capacity for evil. We would then learn that we do not represent a "new world" in the sense of "moral superiority" or "goodness" as compared with the "old world"—that we are a nation like other great nations, neither intrinsically better nor worse, only wealthier and morally a little more arrogant. Further, we could profit from Hannah Arendt's study of the Nazis which revealed how evil could be rendered so commonplace, banal, and so interwoven into the social order that respectable people simply learn to live with it.

Instead, our present administration, acting on cues from previous ones and abetted by the popular prophets of folk religion, contrived to re-interpret these experiences in terms of "America's finest hour" and in culminating our dreams for "a full generation of peace." Rather than saying that the war was an expensive but necessary evil for such and such justification and the settlement that was ironed out was the best possible given the exigencies of time and place, we are offered the pap of "peace with honor" and moral righteousness. It is instructive to note that over 50,000 people have been killed in Vietnam since "peace with honor" officially began about a year ago. Again we must ask ourselves how much moral leadership, how much respect for the law, and how much integrity do we really want?

Which way ahead for american politics?

One is tempted to examine and evaluate the various measures that have been proposed to safeguard us against more Watergates in the future. This would require an equal amount of space that

is unavailable here. The following questions need to be explored by policy-makers and political scientists.

National security

(1) What is a legitimate concept of national security and how may official secrecy be curbed? How may priorities be established for declassifying mountains of unjustifiably "secret" material now sitting in Washington? The classification system grew out of World War II and the cold war fear of espionage; in just two decades the modest Executive denial of information has been escalated to include all the deliberations and documents and conversations of 2.5 million government employees. If this logjam could be cleared, judicial inquiry could be freer, public officials would have less success in fabrication, and the public would have greater access to truth.

Curbing power

(2) Can steps be taken to curb both the awesome power and official burdens of the Presidency? The responsibilities of the President at the apex of a gigantic bureaucracy have increased with urbanization and industrial technology and production with their concomitant problems affecting both economy and ecology. Perhaps a return to congressional comity with the Presidency and, like the recent War Powers Bill passed over Nixon's veto, a further clarification of the President's war-making capacity, can bring needed relief; an objective evaluation of the prospects of reviving congressional powers, however, leads one to conclude that such a reversal seems remote.

Campaign financing

(3) Can steps be taken to curb campaign financing abuses and excesses? With the electronic media have come new styles of campaigning which pose a serious threat to democratic government itself. It has been estimated that \$500 million was collected and spent in U.S. elections in 1972 and the methods of fund solicitation and purposes for disbursement are convincing evidence that new controls and guidelines are essential. There is much variance of opinion about how campaign reform should proceed, but it must be based on the premise that the electoral system belongs to the voting public and should be controlled by all the people—not the wealthy few.

Watergate and the rest of the iceberg have been viewed here largely in the context of Biblical morality and certainly no new laws or policies

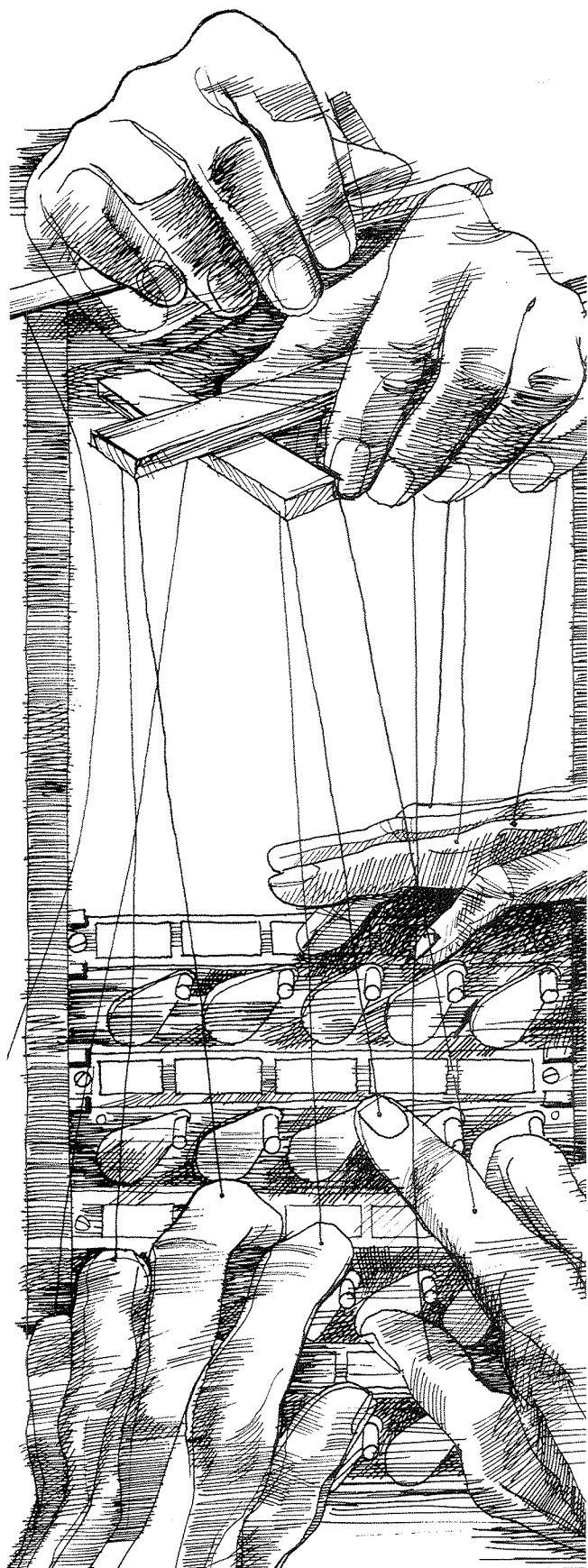
separated from the moral underpinnings that are involved will succeed. Suffice it to say that what is needed is a strong indoctrination in Christian realism.

It is not realistic to dwell upon the faults of any power regime to the neglect of the good they have accomplished. There is reason to hope that Nixon's seeking detente with Communist China and Russia will do more to affect our lives and the lives of our children than anything that comes out of Watergate. Nor is it realistic to ignore or attempt to escape the unpleasant news. When Christians avoid responsibility by pleading ignorance of all the facts, uncritically accept all the pronouncements of cherished politicians as gospel, and impugn the loyalty and patriotism of those who are critical, they are "rendering unto Caesar" more than is his due.

Finally, it is not realistic to search for scapegoats for the current malaise. The most popular scapegoat has been the American press. But Christians should reaffirm the value of the adversary relationship between the press and the government and insist that our mass media be more than a megaphone for any given administration. A free press can be the most valuable tool for keeping democratic machinery running smoothly.

Put positively, Christian realism permits us to celebrate a constitutional system that allows us to choose our leaders and shape our policy while, concomitantly, reassuring us that it is ultimately not our representatives but a system of law and justice that determines how we live within that freedom. Our founding fathers did not place the government above the people, but the people above the government; they said the people had certain "inalienable" rights which emanated not from their politicians but from their Creator and, as Thomas Jefferson said in his First Inaugural, "to violate [them] would be oppression."

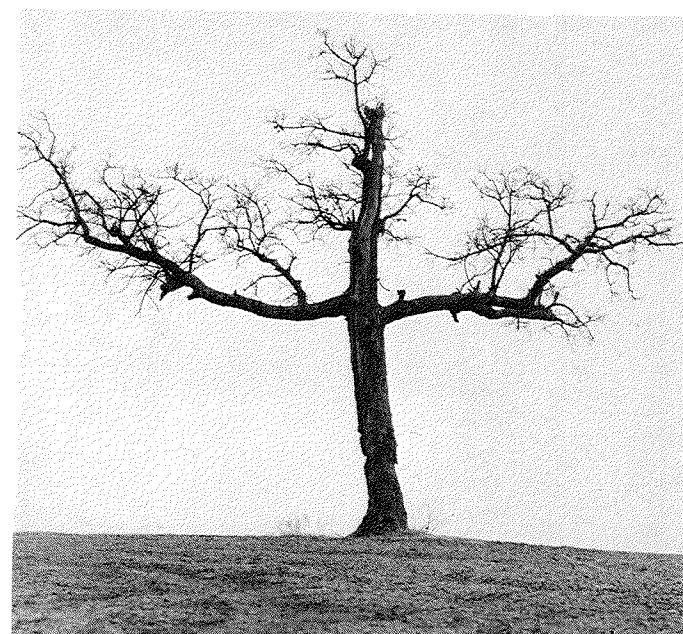
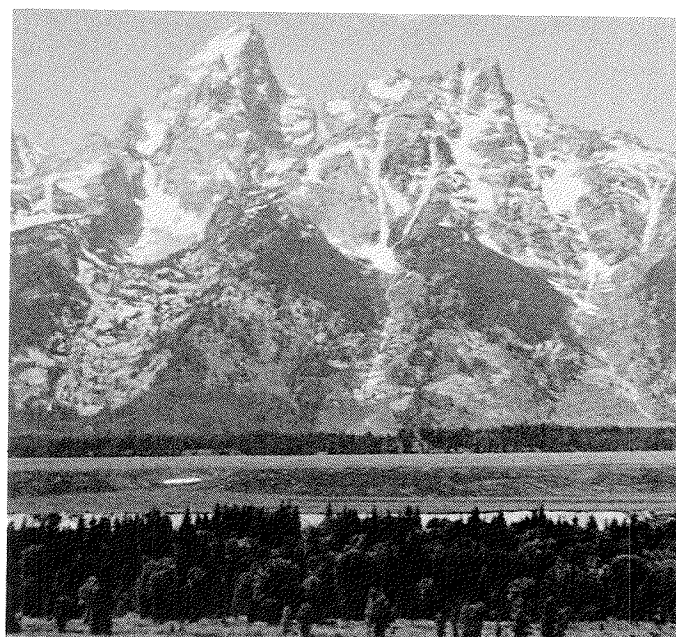
Christian realism assures us that it is not just any one administration but that all persons who occupy positions of civil power are susceptible to temptations to misuse that power. Because only God is to be ultimately trusted, because Jesus' words in Luke 12 give us renewed courage to trust the truth no matter how unpalatable it may be, we know now to deal cautiously and mercifully with all human assertions of power and authority. With this realistic view of man, recent events have proven again for Christians the wisdom of Reinhold Niebuhr's oft-quoted statement: "Man's capacity for justice makes democracy possible. His inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary."

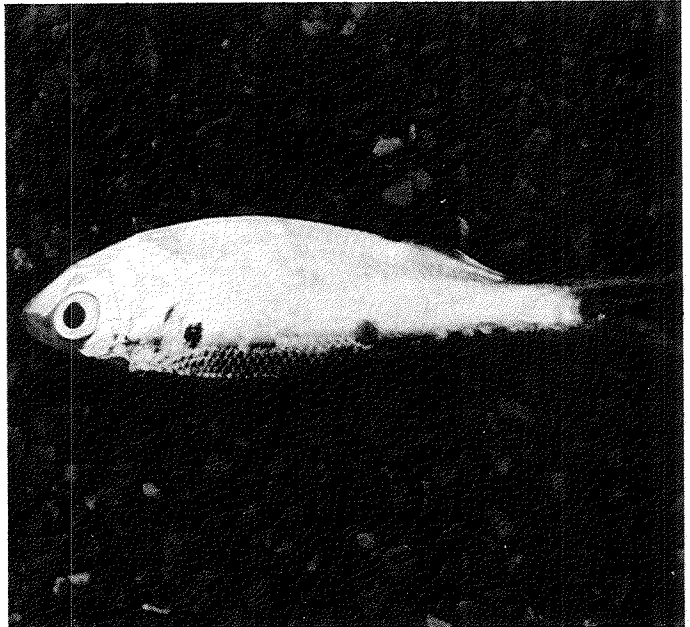
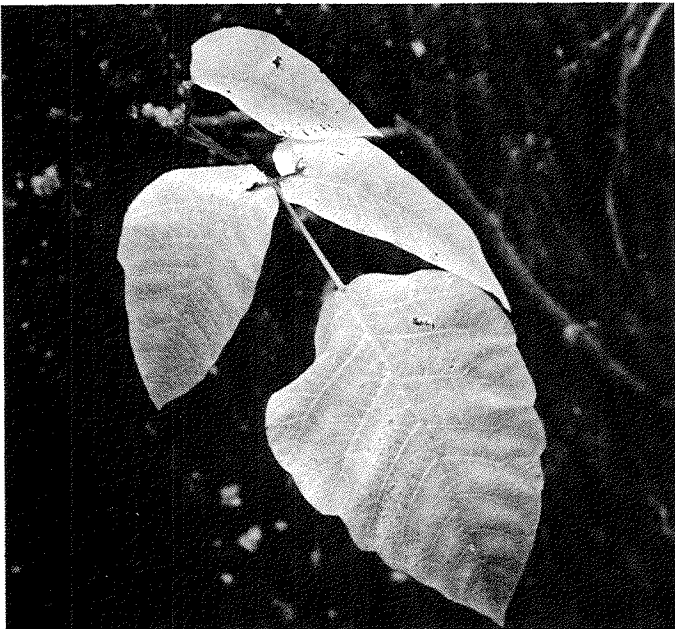
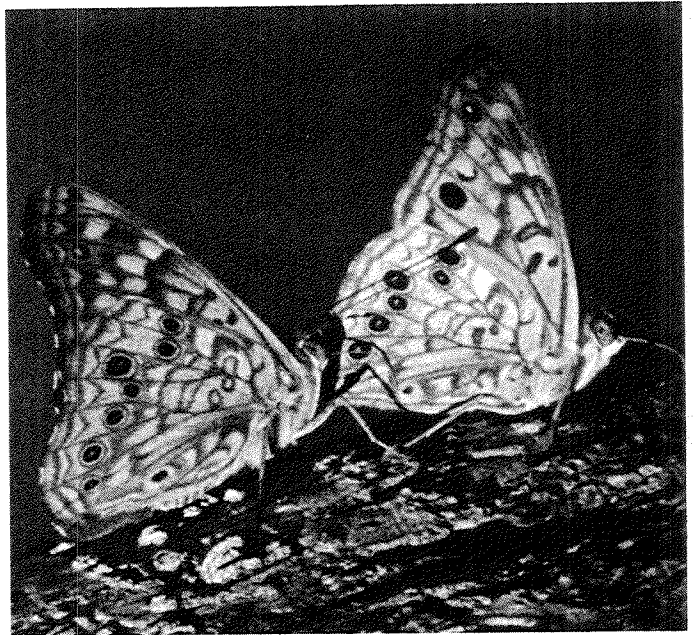


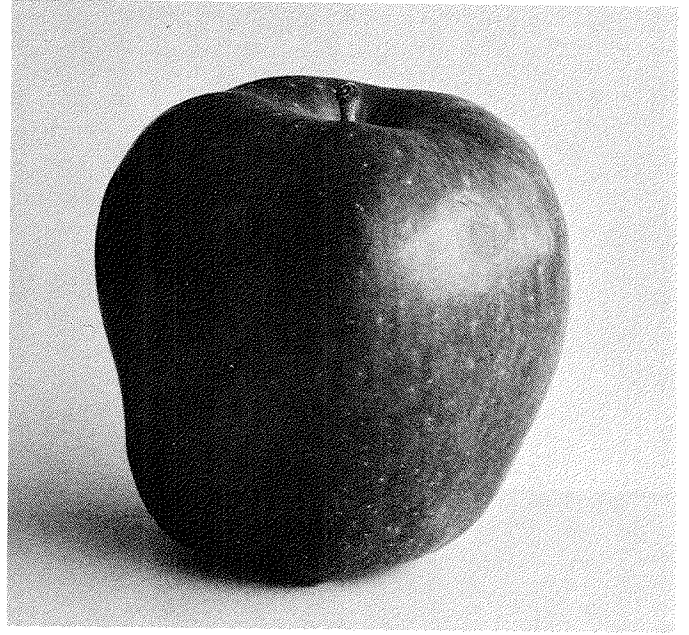
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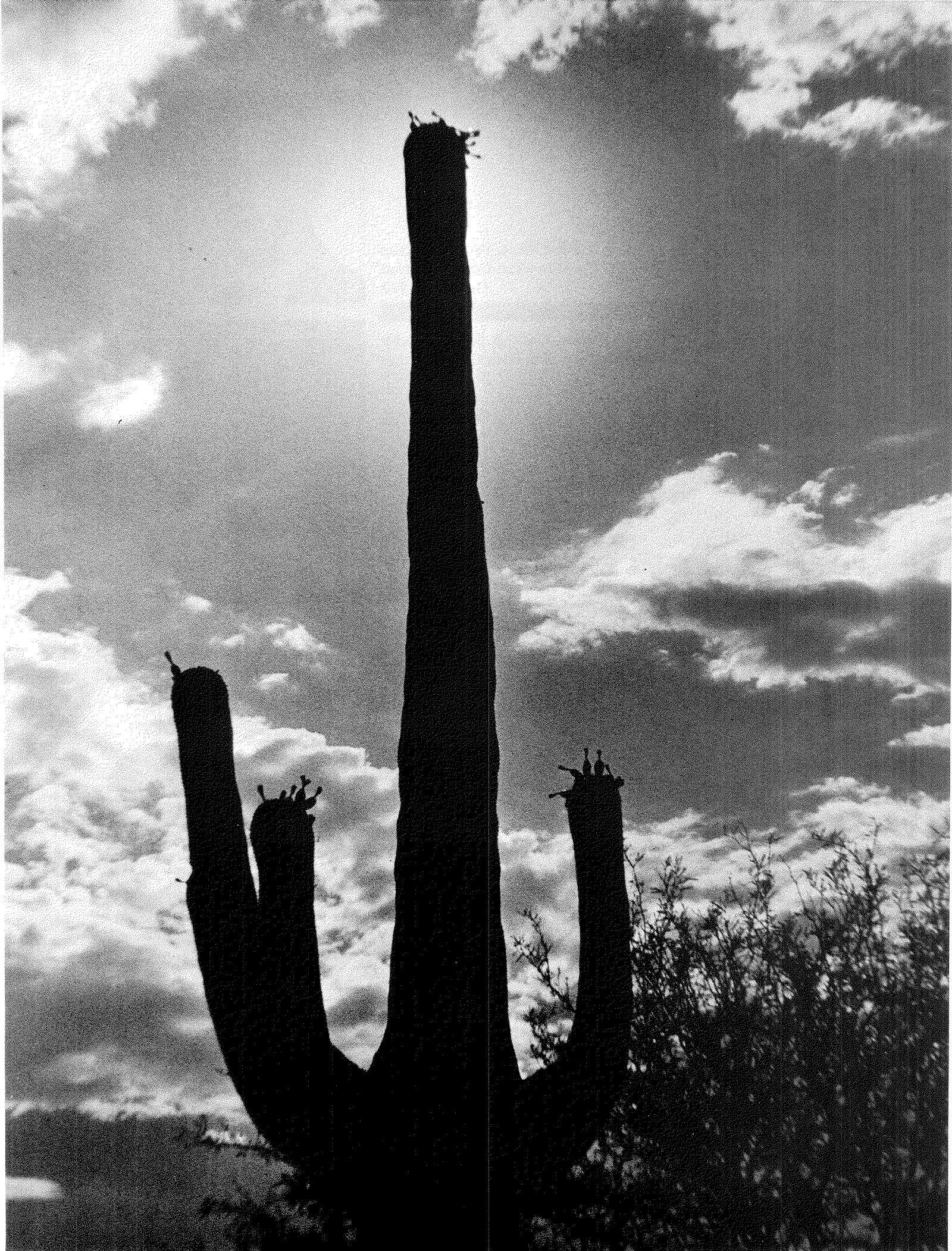
A PORTFOLIO OF PHOTOGRAPHS BY
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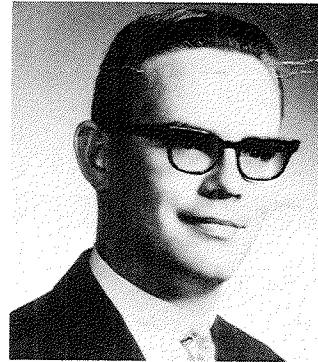




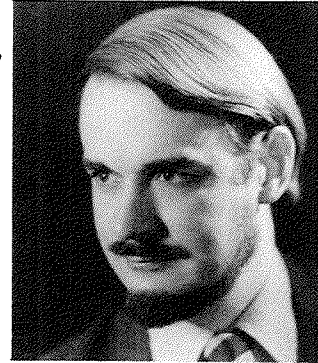




First Place, Paul L. Watson
"Creation And Contamination"
October, 1972



Second Place, S. Scott Bartchy
"Before We Ever Saw Each Others' Faces"
January, 1973



MISSION AWARDS 1973

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David Stewart
"To Believe or Not To Believe," September, 1972
Gerald C. Tiffin
"Christian Youth and The Future," February, 1973

The Trustees of *Mission* established its Annual *Mission* Awards program to promote quality writing on important religious topics and to encourage a sharper focus on the problems of Christian life in the twentieth century. The first Awards were made in the fall of 1969.

The 1973 Awards recipients were chosen from the authors of articles published in *Mission* during the publication year, July, 1972 through June, 1973. All material was judged by a panel of judges independent of *Mission* Trustees comprising: Professor Thomas A. Langford, Department of English and Associate Dean of the Graduate School, Texas Tech University; Mrs. Vernon (Alice) Boyd, community worker, minister's wife and literateur, Detroit, Michigan; J. Harold Thomas, minister of the Westchester Church of Christ, Los Angeles, California; and Professor Robert Randolph, Director of Residents and Instructor of History, Dana Hall School, Wellesley, Massachusetts.

Material was judged on the basis of its effectiveness in bringing the biblical message to bear on the twentieth century world, its relevance to contemporary religious life, its originality and creativity, and its communications effectiveness and reader appeal.

Paul L. Watson—first place winner—is an assistant professor of Bible and Religion at Erskine College in Due West, South

Carolina. A native of Houston, Texas, Dr. Watson received the B.D. and Ph.D. degrees from Yale University. He joined the faculty of Erskine College in 1968 where he teaches religion, Bible and ethics. During the 1970-1971 academic year, Dr. Watson was a member of the faculty of Pepperdine College. He has been active as a teacher in congregations in Texas, Connecticut and South Carolina. He is married to the former Mary Ann Henderson of Houston and is the father of three children.

In his award-winning article, "Creation and Contamination" (October, 1972), Dr. Watson examines the biblical basis for the Christian's relationship to the natural world in which he lives. He recognizes that ecological problems are complex and interlock with many other problems. But he feels there is a unique Christian response to be made.

Some commentators have claimed that man's flagrant use of the natural world is an outgrowth of the western world's Judeo-Christian heritage—a heritage which put God in heaven rather than on earth and made it possible for man to exploit nature with a mood of indifference. Watson, however, contends that the biblical message regarding man's relation with the natural world needs to be understood properly. The mandate God gave man to have *dominion over the earth* "was not a license to despoil the earth; it was rather a mandate to care for it, as Israel's attitude toward her own land and the laws which regulated the use of that land will show," he says.

Dr. Watson's first response to the ecological crisis "is a resounding acknowledgement that I should be concerned *as a Christian* with matters of the environment. At their best, both Judaism and Christianity have been world-affirming rather than world-denying: 'The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein' (Psalm 24:1)." The New Testament, he claims, likewise recognizes the world as God's and as such, is good: it is the earth that the meek will inherit. "Thus," Dr. Watson continues, "the whole of the biblical tradition resounds with the chord struck in Genesis 1, *viz.*, that the earth is essentially good. This tradition stood the church in good stead when it was confronted at the very beginning of its existence with its first 'heresy,' that of Gnosticism in its various forms."

Secondly, Prof. Watson contends, the biblical tradition, and especially the Old Testament, affirms that man was given the all-important function of superintending God's world. Corollary to this premise is the contention which every Christian may make as a Christian: "that our ecological mess is frequently the consequence of human sin."

"But what else," Watson asks, "brings about our current ecological crisis, what else other than our own broken agreements and our failure to have regard for our fellowman?" There is then a moral and ethical dimension to our ecological crisis, one which Watson claims is as great as the technological or economic or social dimensions of the crisis, if not greater. And the Christian, he feels, has the obligation to draw this dimension to the attention of his fellowmen.

To do this with honesty and integrity, Watson contends, will be painful for the individual Christian for he must first remove from his own eye its own special plank—"the aluminum can I continue to use, the glass I'm too lazy to take down for recycling, my full-sized American car which still gulps gallons of leaded gasoline or whatever."

Finally, the third response the Christian may make is "that the ultimate redemption of creation is beyond the scope of human enterprise," Watson suggests. "Yet even as he works for a better world for himself and his neighbor, he must do so in full dependence upon the divine will. To put it negatively, the Christian cannot entertain Utopian fantasies about a new Tower of Babel . . . this time successful, created entirely by human effort."

Professor Watson's article grew out of an interest created by his participation in team-teaching a course in contemporary ethics at Erskine College. In his research into the topic, he discovered relatively little attention in religious literature to the theology and ethics of ecology and the natural environment. Asked in a recent interview how his students responded to his case, Dr. Watson replied, "... mixed. Products of a secular and materialistic society, it was difficult for many of them to see that the state of our natural environment today was an ethical or moral issue."

S ■ Scott Bartchy, who tied for second place, is associate professor in the Emanuel School of Religion at Milligan College, Tennessee. A native of Canton, Ohio, Bartchy received the B.A. degree from Milligan College and the S.T.B. and Ph.D. degrees from Harvard University. His special field of teaching and research is the New Testament and Christian Origins. From 1968 to 1974 Dr. Bartchy served with the Disciples Institute for the Study of Christian Origins in Tuebingen, Germany, first as assistant director and then as director. From 1971 to 1974 he also held a teaching appointment in New Testament studies in the Protestant Theological Faculty at the Eberhard

Karls Universitaet in Tuebingen. Dr. Bartchy has served variously as youth minister, associate minister, campus minister and minister with congregations in Ohio, Tennessee, Indiana and Massachusetts. He is married and the father of two children.

The age-old question of "fellowship" in the church is treated by Dr. Bartchy in his award-winning article, "Before We Ever Saw Each Others' Faces" (January, 1973). Professor Bartchy challenges us to compare the factors on which we base fellowship with the biblical basis for fellowship. "But what about a fellowship based on a change of heart? What about the fact that before we ever saw each others' faces, God had already made us one in Christ?" Dr. Bartchy asks.

Bartchy initially reviews some sociological aspects of religion. For many the "religious" in their lives is tied up with their sense of personal security and solemnity. It serves as a shield from the unknown and the uncertain. "It cannot be surprising that the cult life which most people prefer brings together people who already think and act and look alike. For such people are *safe*—we feel good with them, because they reinforce our own values and prejudices. It should not be surprising," Bartchy suggests, "that religious groups in the U.S.A. remain the most segregated of all institutions—that's the nature of religious grouping."

The most common fellowship is what Professor Bartchy calls "an instant fellowship based on the fact that most everyone in the congregation [has] a similar background and [sees] the world in much the same way. God did not have to take away any 'middle wall of partition' to make that fellowship possible—partitions of race, of education, of social class or economic differences." Such religious experiences illustrate how fundamentally divisive religion can be. It reinforces our exclusiveness and self-satisfaction, Bartchy says.

In contrast to man's natural instinct to fellowship only "like creatures," the confession of the Christian—that God chose us, we did not choose him—implies that Christian fellowship is all-encompassing. "He who has God for his father does not lack for brothers and sisters," Bartchy claims. "He who has God for his father cannot choose his brothers and sisters. We can respond to this demand by judging the diversity, the differences, as threatening and unpleasant. Or we can respond by seeing the diversity and the differences as potentially enriching and beautiful, as filling out our own incompleteness."

Jesus Christ severely threatens one's old ways of doing things, one's old attitudes of prudence and safety, of privacy and selfishness, the traditional basis for fellowship. The early church remembered

Jesus as one who questioned men's present existences: the established religious and social order. When Jesus becomes Lord of one's life, Bartchy contends, "he opens my eyes to a lot of things, like problems of other persons, persons that I didn't even know existed before. And he keeps me interested in working on these problems even when the prudent man in me counsels, 'Come on, be indifferent for awhile.'"

In this age of the bankruptcy of many of our institutions—churches included—Professor Bartchy calls for a new beginning for Christians "with a direct, personal relation to God, and a direct, personal relation to each other in his name." He cites Hans Küng, "we have to admit that we do not know the other Christians. But we have begun to know them, and that is already a great step forward for they *are* our brethren, even though they differ from us in many ways. There are many things they do better as Christians than we. . . . Obviously, we do not learn blindly. . . . However, we can test everything." Then he cites Paul's admonition in I Thessalonians 5:21, "Test *everything*; hold fast what is *good*."

In conclusion, Bartchy suggests that "fellowship which is only based on agreement of opinions and forms without a change of heart is a dangerous sect." The basis for our fellowship, he asserts, is Jesus Christ who requires of us a "change of heart." "Indeed, the beauty of the fellowship is the continual invitation to receive a new heart. And our unity will grow when and where each of us puts himself in God's disposal."



William C. Kerley, who tied for second place, is minister of the Covenant Baptist Church in Houston, Texas. A native of Tennessee, he received the B.A. degree from Baylor University and the B.D. and Th.D. degrees from Southwest Baptist Theological Seminary. In addition, he has done post doctoral work at Union Theological Seminary and Harvard University. Dr. Kerley served as minister for several churches in Texas prior to joining the faculty of Southwest Baptist Theological Seminary in 1964, where he remained until his move to Covenant church in 1966 as its first minister. The Covenant church is a unique experiment in church life. A congregation of about 200 members, it shares facilities with a Disciples of Christ congregation and places special emphasis on excellence in Christian education and the development of the "inner man," with congregational retreats and other programs.

Dr. Kerley's award-winning article, "Finding

Faith Again" (November, 1972) grew out of the experiences of a period of special spiritual stress and personal crisis in the congregation. In such periods, many Christians may find that their faith has gone empty. They may suddenly be overwhelmed with a feeling that they have lost God, that their faith has gone flat, that worship has become an absurd routine. To many, "life itself no longer makes sense." "In this kind of world, religious belief is no luxury; it is essential. In the face of all that is, if we lose the ability to believe, life becomes unbearable," Kerley asserts.

He cites several aspects of current living which get us down, drain us of our vitality: disappointment—things turn out to be less than we had dreamed of; pathetic contradictions—we are busy but seem to get so little out of our busy-ness; lies we have told ourselves—whites interested in integration but racist; excessive stimulation—TV violence, headlines that scream at us. "All of this may sound very hopeless to you," Kerley says, "but I don't believe that. We got ourselves into this situation, and we can get out of it. Take a very serious look at what is going on, and then turn it around—repent. That's how we experience the recovery of the taste of life, its salty tang, the vigor and potency of believing and, consequently, of living."

"This means that faith-full living is not hasty living," Dr. Kerley asserts. "... full life does not consist in the broad way which seeks to accumulate as many things, ideas, experiences as possible. Too much will smother us . . . under such pressures we do not exhaust events; they exhaust us. Vitality is in depth, not in quantity. And the phrase 'eternal life' in the Bible has to do with quality, with depth—not with quantity."

"Faith-full living is also reflective living," Kerley says. The Bible has it that the righteous man meditates day and night and sends his roots down like a tree planted by a river."

"Faith-full living is also liturgical living, full of symbols and myths to which you give yourself. You can't hold back from the symbols, the drama, the poetry, the myths of whatever faith you have and still expect to live," he claims.

In conclusion, Dr. Kerley calls the individual to spiritual renewal. "Listen! Tired, exhausted, thirsty, hungry, hurting one—you can be renewed. Sure, it may require new habits, new discipline, a new direction. But the miracle is your ability to be reborn, if you want it. The miracle is the inexhaustible possibility of grace available to you."

CARL H. STEM
Mission Awards Secretary

LOOKING OUT

EVANGELICAL Christians have long been known for their loud denunciation of personal sins and their advocacy of personal pietism. They are equally well known for their silence in regard to the social and political demands of the gospel. There has been growing concern among evangelicals about this silence—what has been called a “failure to demonstrate the love of God to those suffering social abuses and to proclaim God’s justice to an unjust American society.” Recently a group of influential church leaders, ministers, theologians and editors met in Chicago and hammered out what has become known as the *Chicago Declaration*, a 473 word social action statement of evangelical social concern. The purpose of the statement is to arouse America’s millions of evangelicals to a greater degree of social concern and action, and to encourage them to emphasize social and institutional evils as vigorously as they do personal sins. The statement is as follows:

As evangelical Christians committed to the Lord Jesus Christ and the full authority of the Word of God, we affirm that God lays total claim upon the lives of his people. We cannot, therefore, separate our lives in Christ from the situation in which God has placed us in the United States and the world.

We confess that we have not acknowledged the complete claims of God on our lives.

We acknowledge that God requires love. But we have not demonstrated the love of God to those suffering social abuses.

We acknowledge that God requires justice. But we have not proclaimed or demonstrated his justice to an unjust American society. Although the Lord calls us to defend the social and economic rights of the poor and the oppressed, we have mostly remained silent. We deplore the historic involvement of the church in America with racism and the conspicuous responsibility of the evangelical community for perpetuating the personal attitudes and institutional structures that have divided the body of Christ along color lines. Further, we have failed to condemn the exploitation of racism at home and abroad by our economic system.

We affirm that God abounds in mercy and that he forgives all who repent and turn from their sins. So we call our fellow evangelical Christians to demonstrate repentance in a Christian discipleship that confronts the social and political injustice of our nation.

We must attack the materialism of our culture and the maldistribution of the nation’s wealth and services. We recognize that as a nation we play a crucial role in the imbalance and injustice of international trade and development. Before God and a billion hungry neighbors, we must rethink our values regarding our present standard of living and promote more just acquisition and distribution of the world’s resources.

We acknowledge our Christian responsibilities of citizenship. Therefore, we must challenge the misplaced trust of the nation in

economic and military might—a proud trust that promotes a national pathology of war and violence which victimizes our neighbors at home and abroad. We must resist the temptation to make the nation and its institutions objects of near-religious loyalty.

We acknowledge that we have encouraged men to prideful domination and women to irresponsible passivity. So we call both men and women to mutual submission and active discipleship.

We proclaim no new gospel, but the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ who, through the power of the Holy Spirit, frees people from sin so that they might praise God through works of righteousness.

By this declaration, we endorse no political ideology or party but call our nation’s leaders and people to that righteousness which exalts a nation.

We make this declaration in the biblical hope that Christ is coming to consummate the Kingdom and we accept his claim on our total discipleship till he comes.

There may be a number of *Mission* readers who wish to sign the above declaration and by so doing add their voice to the call for greater social concern among evangelical Christians. If so, please send your name, address, zip code and the date to *Mission*, 518 Lakevista North, Lewisville, Texas 75067. VLH

MOVIES

Mean Streets (cinema) produced by Jonathan T. Taplin, directed by Martin Scorsese. Screenplay by Scorsese and Mardik Martin. Released by Warner Brothers. Starring Harvey Keitel, Amy Robinson and Robert DeNiro.

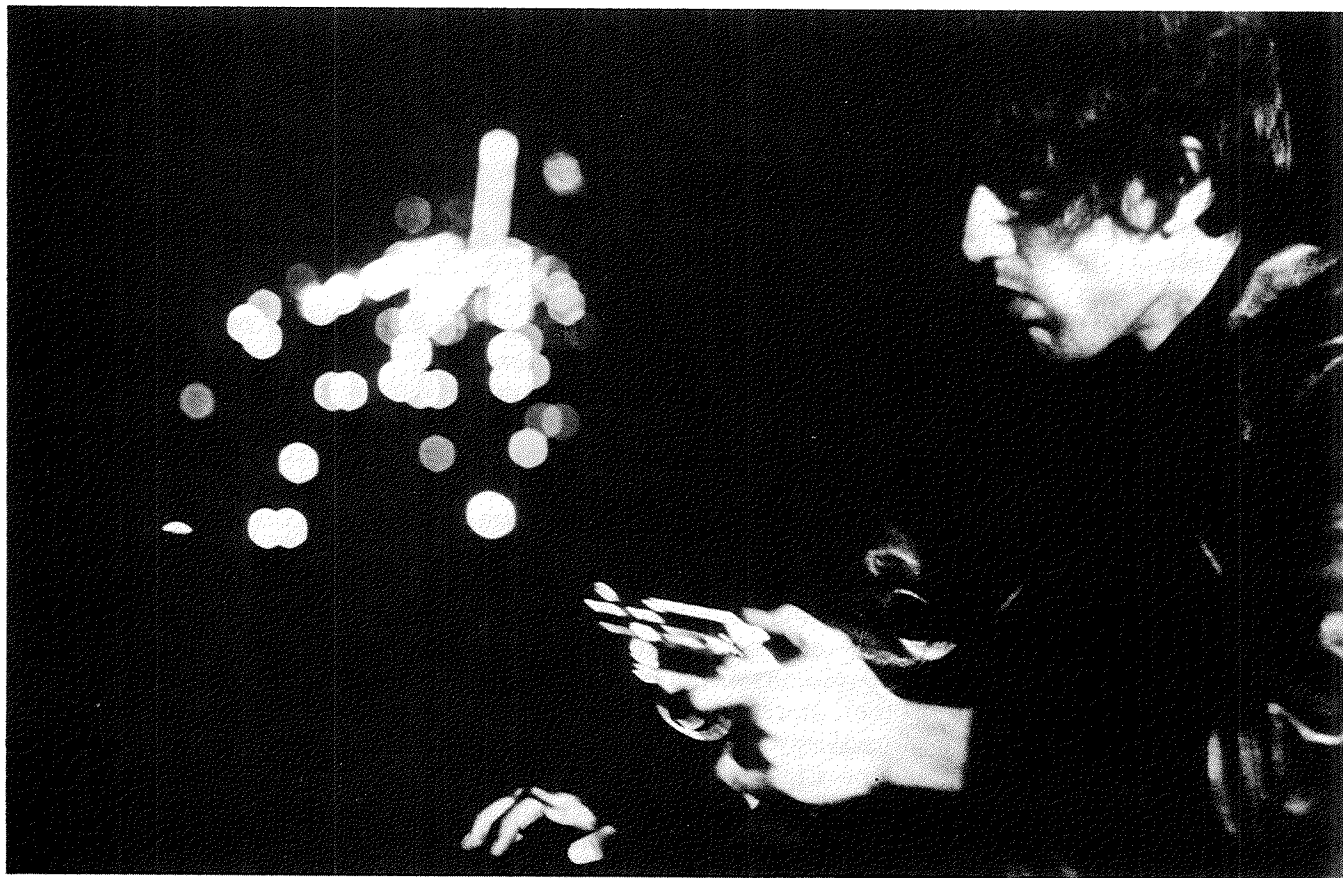
M*ean Streets* is a film about hell. Not the mythical hell of devils with long red tails but the real hell of fear and darkness, of sudden violence and most of all the near total absence of love and caring. We feel isolation in this film; we feel out of place here. What are we doing here? The screen is bathed in dark

hues, the dialogue is rushed and hard to hear, the violence comes quickly and without the warnings we're used to. Why aren't we back home in our middle class homes with our middle class wives waiting for Sunday to visit our middle class pews to listen to a metaphysical view of hell we can write off as a flight of the minister's fancy. We want to be there and not here because this hell cannot be denied. It exists; it is real; and it is here. And I'm afraid if we are honest many of us have little to offer to those trapped there.

The title of the film is from a Raymond Chandler essay on one

of his detective mystery creations, which might lead you to expect this to be a detective movie, a gangster film, but as Martin Scorsese, the creator of this film says, "It's not a gangster movie, it's a people movie." And it is. It is about gangsters, but in a real sense we have not seen before on film. *The Godfather*, for all its gore and horror was essentially a Hollywood-style Mafia-as-Robin Hood picture. The colors were bright and happy (the better to show the blood my dear), the tone was romantic, and the gangsters were beautiful and charismatic. Not so in *Mean*

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FORUM

In Memoriam . . .

Maxine Smith Elam was taken from us in a tragic accident on October 10, 1973. To many, she was best known as a Christian journalist. She had served as editor of the *Christian Woman*, and her thoughtful writings had been published in many religious publications.

The influence for Christ exerted in Maxine's life was wide, deep and strong. That influence continues through her writings and in the hearts of all who knew and loved her. It seems fitting to remember her life in a tangible way by supporting good religious journalism. A gift to *Mission Journal* in her memory is enclosed.

MR. AND MRS. DON L. BAKER
Austin, Texas

Hot lines . . .

Regarding the November issue of *Mission*, especially the interview with Robert Handy: AMEN. Keep the hot lines open and your fingers ever on the pulse of the church.

STEVEN CLARK GOAD
Jeffersonville, Indiana

I have just finished reading the November issue of *Mission* and felt I must write you. Needless to say, I am a grateful reader of *Mission*, and I am especially appreciative of your disposition to recognize, call upon, and share with your readers the great learning, spiritual insights, and wisdom of foremost religious leaders, regardless of denomi-

national labels. Even more, I appreciate the fact that you are doing it with frank openness and appreciation rather than on the sly, and/or with prior orthodox sterilization and antiseptizing of them and display of your "space suit" to guarantee your immunization. The capacity to acknowledge and accept the goodness and truth to be found in people of other persuasions and traditions without elaborate apologies is, as I see it, one of our most urgent desiderata. Someone had to, in the words of Marshall, "end the silence," or, even more, break the pathetic shell of fancied absoluteness if not infallibility which has stifled communication with some of the richest grace of our times, and I feel *Mission*, along with a few other journals, is doing a magnificent service in that direction.

Though reared by a beautifully ecumenical father (who had never heard of such a word), I got properly *fixed* at the beginning of my ministry, and fought desperately for twenty or more years to maintain the posture, trying all along to drown out my true feelings with excessive declarations of orthodoxy. Fortunately, at that sort of second adolescence of one's life, when one is likely to quit kidding himself and come clean on the one hand, or to close his eyes and commit himself to blind possession on the other, I found the grace of broader understanding, a wider and more genuine Christian fellowship, and a set of other circumstances which strengthened me and enabled me to suffer without guilt or regret

the loss of my standing among Churches of Christ. That was in the early 1950's. For several years I felt a great loneliness so far as "our brotherhood" was concerned. I know there were many who shared my experience, but we were not in touch with one another. One of the great services of papers like *Mission* is the assurance they give of the many who are seeking the fellowship of freedom in Christ. I thank you and others.

I still have great regard for the restoration movement and the lofty insights and ideals of its best leaders. I am convinced that had we lived up to those ideals, making adjustments as they would have done, and as they in fact did, we would be in a much different posture today. I have no desire to leave it, but to see its truly ecumenical intentions fulfilled.

DAVID H. BOBO
Indianapolis, Indiana

Responding to Thomas . . .

Writing as a heretical schismatic, or maybe just a schismatic heretic, I merely want to say "no" to the Gospel According to J. D. Thomas in his article, "The Bible and the Church" [November, 1973]. In addition to this I deny (is this a mortal sin?) the virgin birth of John Locke. While Thomas' article is hardly worth a response, I just have to say this: *I thought that God graciously reveals himself to us through his son, not through a book!* We are justified by faith in the son, not whether we can exegete the book

of Acts. I believe the Bible because it points beyond itself to the loving Daddy of the Universe who longs to bounce us on his knee.

GARY CUMMINGS
Fort Worth, Texas

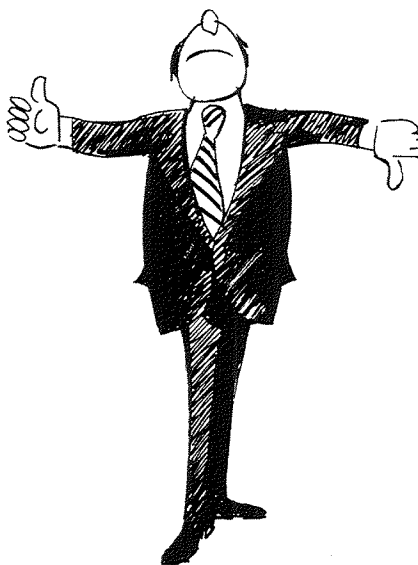
May I compliment J. D. Thomas on his article, "The Bible and the Church," in *Mission*, [November, 1973] and express my appreciation to *Mission* for its policy for providing a forum for different points of view.

WILLIAM H. PEEPLES
South Miami, Florida

I want to make known how much I appreciated J. D. Thomas [*Mission*, November, 1973] taking the time to respond to the article written by Wayne Willis [*Mission*, June, 1973]. I found the response of Thomas to be accurate and to the point. It is truly unfortunate that Willis is willing to blame the church and Christian college (who do not claim to be perfect) for his personal doubts and inadequacies. As the graduate assistant who preceded Willis by two years at the same Christian college, I would like to say that I found the Bible faculty to be both competent and eager to answer and aid those students who were honest enough to make known their doubts.

GARY COLVIN
San Rafael, California

The November issue of *Mission* is an interesting study in contrasts. The cover, first article, and inter-



view reinforce the principle of dialogue, the extension of the denomination known as the Church of Christ to an active communication with other Christian bodies. This is healthy and encouraging, albeit rather tardy. The article of J. D. Thomas, however, brings us back to what may be an unfortunate reality. In response to Wayne Willis' fine article on the frustrations of a Church of Christ liberal, Dr. Thomas makes it evident that meaningful dialogue between conservative and liberal *within* the Church of Christ is virtually unreachable. If this is the case—and Dr. Thomas' remarks imply that he does not or will not understand the essence of a liberal's plight—what hope is there for dialogue *between* the Church of Christ and other denominations? Is the *Mission* emphasis on dialogue—commendable as it is—a futile effort in light of the forces who control the Church of Christ?

PAUL A. PARRISH
South Bend, Indiana

I am a Christian recently awakened to the reality of Christ in Christianity—to the Christian's essentially spiritual relationship with God—thanks to several influences, particularly Wayne Willis' June article. However, I have continued to feel disturbed that several very learned and highly respected Bible scholars, particularly some of those at Abilene Christian College, of which I am a graduate, emphasize the doctrinal specificity of Christianity. I was strongly reassured by J. D. Thomas' response to Willis in the November *Mission*. Dr. Thomas was grossly unfair, misrendering and ridiculing Mr. Willis on practically every point. Indeed, I had the distinct impression that this distinguished professor and Bible department chairman had no real understanding of what Mr. Willis had to say. I no longer wonder, thanks to Dr. Thomas' enlightening article, whether highly intelligent, learned Christians can, saddeningly, fail to grasp the essence of their own faith.

BOB GIFFIN
Lubbock, Texas

Coincidences?

I look forward to the Marshall interviews with much eagerness! My own tiny experience which culminated in F. F. Bruce writing a foreword for my commentary on Hebrews has made me understand just the feeling of Mr. Marshall in relating all his "coincidences" (?). Great opportunities are before us to do good if we will take them.

EDWARD FUDGE
Athens, Alabama

MOVIES

Continued from Page 27

Streets. The people are average-looking, and the colors are dark and dingy as they should be for those who are most alive at night. The tone is one of darkness and pain.

It is an autobiographical film—a slice of the life of Martin Scorsese as liberated by poetic license. Charlie (Harvey Keitel) is Scorsese, and all of the main characters are based on real-life companions with whom the director ran in his formative years in the Little Italy section of New York City.

As did Charlie in the movie, Scorsese had a few tries at shady operations but couldn't make a go of it. His next option was the priesthood, and here is the key to one of the most interesting areas of the film from our standpoint. Because the hero of the film (is that title ever really applicable anymore?) is not only a loan collector for a syndicate group but also a devout and guilt-plagued Catholic.

Every Saturday he is present for a confession resulting in an assignment of Hail Mary's and Novenas. This penance will not do for Charlie. In his words, words from which we all might profit, Charlie says, "We make up for our sins on the streets and at home, not at church."

Charlie is given to strange acts of penance, such as sticking his hand into a flame—something he says he was taught by a priest.

This fascination with fire is something that recurs and adds to the imagery of hell, not only in Charlie's present life but in his fears of the future. Charlie also works out his penance by helping the untouchables of his society. Johnny Boy, a troubled and troublesome punk, is taken on by Charlie as part of his "street penance." He extends his hand and his help to Johnny Boy and, even at personal risk, an epileptic girl with whom no one else will associate. And in this risk and finally the shedding of his own blood, he finds some sense of personal redemption.

Technically and artistically the film is fascinating. The acting especially is quite remarkable. The stand-out performance is by Robert DeNiro, as the outrageous, fiery, and unpredictable Johnny Boy. His performance is so overpowering that it threatens to blot out the almost universal excellence of the rest of the cast. Harvey Keitel is superb in a quiet way that is so real that you almost don't notice the high quality of his art. The greatest triumph is the ensemble playing of the actors. They act and react together beautifully.

The use of music is terrific. From the beginning, we are jarred by rock music at one moment and at the next, we are treated to a vicious fist fight in counterpoint to slow and majestic Italian music. The camera work is excellent and although the dialogue is sometimes difficult to understand, it adds to the atmosphere of this particular film.

There is a surrealistic feeling in

some of the camerawork, intermixed with the realistic, especially in the party scene. We really get the feeling of intoxication—not a very pleasant feeling, but one of confusion and terror.

Another interesting technical device is the use of home movies to introduce the characters, a very effective technique. We are endeared to these men in moments of simple humanity, making it much more difficult to write them off as animals in moments of savage fury.

The whole film is played with a background of a religious holiday, full of sharp focus and brilliant colors in contrast to Charlie's world of dingy darkness and broken neon tubing. This is the world of the night people who "hate the sun" and go to bed at six a.m.

Although this film is presently the top critical success of 1973, it is definitely not for everyone. An R rating means that a child may be admitted with a parent or adult guardian. We strongly suggest that only the most mature teenager be allowed to see this film. Adults should be advised that while this film is valuable as an outstanding piece of film making and as something that may teach us of hell and our inadequacy to deal alone with the savage world that surrounds us, it is also a shattering, violent, and depressing film. It is not a movie for the whole family, nor the thing to see to take your mind off a hard day at the office. But if you are ready to face its demands, you will find it a most challenging experience.

What & So What

FROM THE EDITOR

DURING THE PAST decade the debate over the primary thrust of the gospel has raged. Is it personal or is it social? Should our concern be with the saving of souls or with the serving of human needs in the here and now of our existence? Those in the more conservative ranks of Christianity have stressed the all-importance of "soul saving," and have accused those churches and groups involved in social action with neglecting the gospel message. The more liberal churches have felt the burden of human suffering and have sought to alleviate both personal suffering and institutional and political injustice which tended to promote social evils. The rhetoric of accusation and denigration has reverberated around the walls of theological discussion, making a crack so wide that many have given up in despair any hope of ever mending it. The manifestation of this gap is expressed in the either/or syndrome—Christianity is either a religion of personal salvation and private morality or of public justice and social ethics. Take your pick, brother—you can't have both.

But is that really so? I call for our people to stand in the midst of this gap and to again bear witness to the unitive dimension of the gospel. If we are true to our biblical story we will reject the either/or syndrome, opting instead for the both/and alternative. And we must do so through both proclamation and demonstration. Let us bring heaven and earth together, living for the city of God in the city of man. To

promote either the personal salvation dimension of the gospel or the social demands of the gospel to the neglect of the other is to preach and demonstrate only half a gospel—and a half a gospel is really no gospel at all.

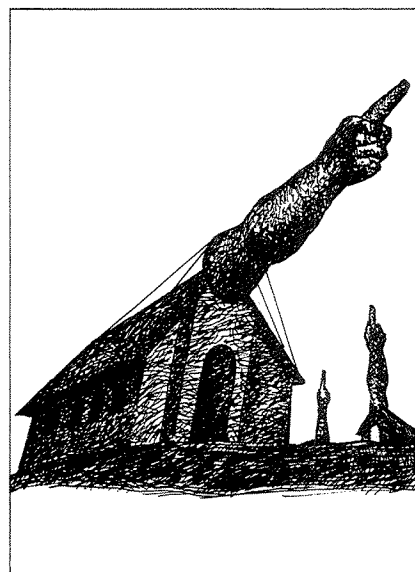
Water Rauschenbusch, at the turn of the century wrote in *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, "There are two great entities in human life, the human soul and the human race—and religion is to save both. The soul is to seek righteousness and eternal life, and the race is to seek righteousness and the kingdom of God." While one might quibble with some of the words, one can hardly be true to the biblical word and disagree with the thrust of this statement. Our concern must be with the human soul and the human race. One cannot read the Jewish prophets or look at the actions and words of Christ without being overwhelmingly convinced that God is concerned with both the physical and spiritual needs of man. Nearly one third of the New Testament references to salvation denote deliverance from specific ills such as captivity, disease and devil possession. One fifth of the 150 instances of the use of the words save or salvation refer to salvation to be consummated at the last day.

To be sure then, those who would follow Christ today must be concerned with both social evils and private sins. We must not neglect either. As we follow the love ethic of our Lord we will express compassion for the total needs of man. That will

involve on the personal level a seeking of the good of all persons with whom we have discourse. It will involve in the public level a recognition that social injustices must be opposed—and when love is translated into the public sector of communities and nations it comes out looking very much like justice.

Christianity is personal—but it is not private. Jesus Christ is a personal Lord—but he is also the Lord of history and the cosmos. We are not only the objects of salvation but the instruments of salvation for once we have come to Christ we must go in the name of Christ—and that means preaching the good news to the poor, proclaiming release to the captives, recovering the sight of the blind and setting free those who are oppressed. It means addressing ourselves both to the personal needs of men and women and the social needs of society.

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